

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2012

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gerald Carr
Teresa Doan
Gary Hall
Sandra Edwards
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker
Anglyn Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron
Larry Dickerson
James Gatewood

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Jim Hill
AER Vacant

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Mary Douglas, Rickey Etheridge, Rhonda Garmon, Linda Haynes, Robert Lamb, Christy Lamas, Carol Marshall, Ginny McWilliams, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Kena Sabb, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Tanya VanHouten, Coral Virden, Cassandra Williams

CALL TO ORDER. *Chairman Mr. Gerald Carr called the meeting to order.*

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. *Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the agenda. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. **Motion passed.***

APPROVAL OF 12/09/11 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Walker to approve the minutes. Mrs. Kara Aaron seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

Chairman Carr informed the Board that, due to a conflict, Mrs. Sharon Berry was unable to attend the board recognition ceremony scheduled today. Plans were made to hold the recognition event at the June meeting.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mrs. Morris asked the board to join her in welcoming Mr. Rickey Etheridge, Licensed Professional Counselor, as a new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Little Rock office. She also noted that DSB bids goodbye to Rehab Teacher Doris Weaver and VFP fiscal specialist Ernest Hart. Mrs. Weaver has served in the West Memphis area and is

transferring back to a position in the Division of County Operations. Mr. Hart came to the VFP program from Seattle and has returned home. Mrs. Morris added that DSB Quality Assurance Coordinator Ginny McWilliams (CRC) has been assigned to serve as interim Field Services Administrator through September 30th, following the retirement of Mrs. Donna Walker.

NATIONAL ISSUES:

RSA Commissioner Retirement - Lynnae Rutledge has retired due to significant family health issues.

Budget Control Act – The congressional “super committee”, formed to enact provisions of the Budget Control Act, has struggled to meet its targets in reducing the federal deficit. The impact of this situation is unknown at this time.

Reauthorization of Workforce Investment Act – Reauthorization is still wavering, but there is a remote possibility of it being passed this session.

Omnibus Budget Act – The Omnibus Budget Act currently folds training, migrant workers, and supportive employment into VR. The authorization does carry with it a COLA (cost of living) for the VR program, but is set equal to the consumer price index, which has been flat in recent years.

Rest Stops – The discussion of the commercialization of rest stops has been going up and down. The latest word is that Amendment 1742 proposed by Senator Rob Portman of Ohio is up for consideration again on Tuesday. We will see whether this moves to impact Randolph Sheppard. Commercialization would not have as great an impact in Arkansas as in larger states that have a lot more locations on their highways.

HR 3086 – The Fair Wages for Persons with Disabilities Act (HR3086) that NFB has been promoting has been referred to a subcommittee, but is still active. There is a possibility that it will go through.

TACE – DSB has been participating in regional meetings sponsored by the Technical Assistance Continuing Education (TACE) center, housed in Hot Springs. One of the best things to come out of the DSB partnership with TACE is the Rehab leadership training program in Oklahoma that has welcomed four DSB participants: Taya Kearney, JoAnn McAdoo, Amy Jackson and Tanya VanHouten.

Return on VR Investment – Inquiries from congressional aides indicate that congress is very interested in directing federal funding toward programs that produce measurable current benefits to citizens and reduce or eliminate future costs for those same citizens. The VR program has long been accountable in these areas.

Michigan Commission for the Blind - Executive Order –Recently, the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) and its board were suddenly reassigned organizationally and functionally by Executive Order, allowable under Michigan law. The Vending Facility Program (VFP) was transferred to the Office of Management and Budget and the rest of MCB was put in DHS, where the general agency was also placed. MCB can appeal to the Governor and the Michigan General Assembly until April 24. Thereafter, the restructuring stands. According to the 2011 RSA monitoring review, DSB has a legally strong and effective organizational structure. However, as happened in Michigan, this structure can change with little warning, and so it behooves us to ensure state officials remain aware of the distinct advantages of the DSB Commission structure enabling Arkansas to provide specialized services for persons who are blind or severely visually impaired.

STATE ISSUES:

Medicaid – State government is examining how to control the rising cost of Medicaid. The greatest potential DSB has to reduce Medicaid costs is to reduce consumer dependence on Medicaid by working with them to achieve good, well-paying jobs that eventually enable them to move off of Medicaid.

Employment First – DSB has been very involved in the planning for implementation of Executive Order 10-17, the Governor's initiative to increase the number of persons with disabilities who are employed. Employment first has been a natural for DSB and participating in the Employment First task force was very much to our advantage. It helped get information about DSB and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to all the other member organizations of the task force, which created demand for more information. One of the things we were able to accomplish almost immediately was to call OPM attention to minimum qualifications in job specifications that kept persons with disabilities from being eligible to even turn in an application. OPM immediately corrected the dozen or so references that stood in the way of the application process.

Career Readiness Certificate Accessibility - Projections show the U.S. is going to have far more jobs than it will have workers by 2018, because the baby boomer generation will be retiring. DSB wants to position its consumers to gain an edge to secure the better jobs as they become available. The plan is to have DSB consumers already screened for skills, and in possession of, whatever Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) is needed to be able to submit their applications and compete for preferable jobs. DSB is negotiating with the federal Department of Labor to make sure that the Career Readiness Certificate on-line process is accessible to our consumers so they are not unreasonably burdened by the process and the results properly reflect the consumer's knowledge and skills.

Workforce Partnerships –Department of Workforce Services (DWS), has contacted DSB again this year to meet with DWS managers from across the state March 29th during their annual meeting. The purpose is to discuss the issues of DWS customers who are blind and seeking employment, and how the Workforce Centers can better serve them.

Jump Start/Transition – The coalition of staff from the School for the Blind, ESVI and DSB is moving right along with Jump Start planning for the summer Transition work activity. The deadline for applications is March 30. Jumpstart will occur June 3-June 22 on ASBVI campus. The application is on the web.

Emergency/Disaster Preparedness – In devising the statewide plans for Disaster Preparedness this year, special focus has been placed statewide on the preparation needs of persons with disabilities. DSB Staff Development Coordinator, Tony Brown, has an extensive military background, during which he also managed disaster preparedness efforts. Tony has met with Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) personnel and will assist them and DHS in helping both departments prepare for the disaster-readiness needs of individuals with disabilities, including those who are blind.

DIVISION ISSUES:

Service Statistics – Field Staff are recording rapid improvement in FFY 2012 closure statistics, which had been stalled, due to turnover and the natural flow of case services, meaning the staggered movement between application, plan, service and employment. Our homemaker percentage remains above twenty percent right now, which we have committed to RSA to lower.

Legislative Session – DSB's Appropriation Act, like the rest of state government, is basically unchanged by the 2012 session, because it was addressed as a confirmation of the second year of the biennial authorization from 2011. The work on the 2013 session and all the requests for personnel changes that DSB needs so desperately will start this summer, and go before the legislative council and joint budget committee in the fall of '12 and winter of '13.

Maintenance of Effort – We are on track to be able to meet our Maintenance of Effort, which means our state match required to buy down the federal Voc Rehab dollar. This makes DSB eligible to request the incentive funding made available through reallocation.

State Plan — DSB program managers are working steadily on developing the DSB 2013 state plan based on goals approved at the December meeting. We will modify the plan in response to the public forum this afternoon and develop strategies to respond to federal monitoring comments, consumer feedback, satisfaction surveys and staff feedback, for approval by the board at the June Meeting.

Small Business Initiative – DSB Field Services staff are scheduled for training on the Operation Jump Start small business initiative May 7-9. This is a national program that has a name similar to (and confusing with) our state Jump Start transition program.

AIRS - DSB continues in the development of the Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS), including NEWSLINE. AIRS is listed in the state plan under Innovation and Expansion, because the technology is expected to change rapidly in the coming years.

The Friends of AIRS 'board' is designing a consumer satisfaction survey process, currently set as a call-in methodology.

Recruitment Difficulties – DSB has been notified by OPM that, regardless of the recruitment delays, rehab counselor and rehab teacher vacancies will all be subject to the freeze process.

Older Individuals Who are Blind – The OIB contract with World Services for the Blind, established earlier this year, is beginning to show statistical results with services being provided and results becoming measurable.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FINANCIAL AWARD FOR EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR (EOY) PROCESS, FROM NON-PUBLIC FUNDS – Board members discussed the historically limited number of nominations received in the DSB employee of the year process, and moved to add a financial award of \$100 to each category of Direct Services, Clerical and Administrative Support, payable from the Gift and Bequest Fund. They then added an additional \$100 for the overall winner. The board's nomination review schedule will be set to consider the dates of the award ceremonies and the needs of the board committee. Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion to accept the proposal. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

SCHEDULING OF CONSUMER OF THE YEAR (COY) PROCESS – By the rules, nominations for consumer of the year are to be staggered throughout the year. However, in reality nominations stack up at the end of the service year, at or after October 15th. It was suggested that counselors be allowed to expand their nominee base and make 2012 COY nominations drawing from those consumers closed during either the 2011 or 2012 federal fiscal year, and on the same two year basis in the future. Nominees cannot have been previous area winners. Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion to accept the proposal. Ms. Anglyn Young seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

BOARD STIPENDS TO NATIONAL CONSUMER MEETINGS – State law requires that each state board authorize any reimbursement rates for board members during the first meeting each calendar year. Mr. Walker made a motion that DSB continue to sponsor attendance at national NFB and ACB annual meetings by the NFB and ACB representatives on the DSB Board, or his/her designee. Reimbursement is limited to state rates, and designees must also be a member of the DSB board. Mr. Gary Hall seconded the motion.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY REPORTS 2011 – Ginny McWilliams reported that all closed FFY 2011 VR consumers were polled regarding their satisfaction with DSB services. The survey consisted of ten questions, and consumers were asked to indicate their satisfaction by choosing between strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Of the 530 surveys mailed, 62 or 11.70% came back undeliverable. To

date, 132 surveys have been returned with responses. The 132 surveys returned represented a 28.21% return rate for 2011. Overall, the satisfaction rate was 92.27%. Mrs. McWilliams also reported that all closed FFY 2011 Older Blind program consumers were also polled regarding their satisfaction with DSB services. The survey consisted of nine questions and consumers were asked to indicate their satisfaction by choosing between strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Of the 100 surveys mailed, 4 or 4% came back undeliverable. To date, 50 have been returned with responses. The 50 surveys returned represent a 52.08% return rate for 2011. Overall, the satisfaction rate was 93.57%. The summaries for each of the two surveys are submitted as a formal part of these minutes.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER (DRC) REPORT – Mr. Eddie Miller reported that the Disability Rights Center is really busy dealing with issues that people with disabilities experience. Staff is visiting polling places, the Hot Springs Rehab and institutions of higher education, among others. Any issue that effects people with disabilities, the Disability Rights Center is there to try to assist people, so if DSB staff has issues, or you personally come across voting issues that you are not able to deal with please give DRC a call.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) – No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet and is attached as a formal part of these minutes.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN (1-YR TERM) AND SECRETARY (1-YR TERM) Mr. Walker made a motion to re-elect Ms. Angyln Young as the Vice-Chairperson. Ms. Sandy Edwards seconded the motion. Motion Passed. Mr. Walker made a motion to re-elect Ms. Sandy Edwards as Secretary. The motion was approved unanimously by the Board.

CONSUMER INPUT – The American Council of the Blind (ACB) state convention will be held April 20-21, 2012, in Hot Springs at the Austin Hotel. The ACB national convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, July 6-14, 2012. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) state affiliate convention will be held the first week in October in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The NFB national convention will be held in Dallas, Texas, June 30 – July 6, 2012.

The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, June 8, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A and B.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Edwards
Secretary